



Briefing for:	Children's Safeguarding Policy and Performance Advisory Committee
Title:	Role of Children's Safeguarding Policy and Performance Advisory Committee, and of the Independent Member
Lead Officer:	Hilary Corrick, Independent Social Work Consultant, and Independent Panel Member
Date:	29th June 2010

1. Introduction

The Children's Safeguarding Policy and Performance Advisory Committee was set up by Haringey Council in April 2009 to enable it to examine in more detail the work of children's services and:

- ensure that members have some understanding of key child protection issues;
- ensure that members have confidence in the safeguarding arrangements and practice in Haringey;
- ensure that members have developed a range of questions which enable them to consider all aspects of safeguarding and which can be shared with other members.

The Terms of Reference for the Committee are set out in a separate report to the Committee. Originally when the Committee was set up it was intended that the Committee would be short life, possibly only until the elections in May 2010.

2. Background information

Following the Baby P situation, Members had felt that they had insufficient knowledge and experience in safeguarding children to



challenge or scrutinise the work of Children's Social Care; the Committee would give them more in-depth understanding, the opportunity to consider cases in detail, and meet with service users, referrers and front line workers when appropriate.

It was planned that Members would explore different aspects of child protection in Haringey with the help of key members of staff and develop a longer term programme of debate with staff, in the Laming spirit of respectful enquiry. An Independent Member was appointed to provide advice and training to Members and facilitate the Committee's work.

Members were aware of the range of other mechanisms for scrutinising safeguarding work but noted that the Children's Safeguarding Policy and Performance Advisory Committee is the only backbench Member body that examines individual cases in detail and whose Members have received in depth training. For that reason, the Committee felt that it was important that it continued to undertake this work. The Committee believed it had benefited from the work of the Independent Member and felt that such support was essential to its role.

3. Work undertaken by the Committee

The Committee met regularly throughout its first year. There was training for Committee Members on:-

- Referral processes
- Eligibility thresholds
- Assessment
- Child Protection procedures
- Learning from Serious Case Reviews

The Committee undertook a detailed audit of all referrals received on 1st July 2009, and tracked those cases over time. There were nine new referrals of children on that day. The Committee explored these cases with officers in considerable detail and was challenging about actions taken. The Committee tracked those children throughout the year, with particular scrutiny of those children who became subject to child protection planning.

The Committee commissioned a snapshot feedback survey of a sample of the July 1st cases, to gather the views of referrers and parents. Although this was a very small sample, the Committee was able to identify themes and as a result additional feedback is now provided by the First Response service to referrers.



Haringey Council

The Committee reported to Cabinet on 17th November 2009 about their work and presented recommendations which were endorsed by the Cabinet.

The Committee commissioned a report on all January 2010 referrals of children aged under 5, with a detailed audit of a sample of under 2s, and a further independent audit of a sample across the age range.

The Committee Deputy Chair and the Independent Member met with the Independent Chair of the Local Safeguarding Children Board and the Lead Member for Children, and considered its role within the range of scrutiny mechanisms within Haringey. These include:-

- Monthly multi-agency audits undertaken by the LSCB;
- Case file audits commissioned by the Lead Member;
- Regular reports to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

The Committee has worked closely with Officers from the First Response service, the Assistant Director, Safeguarding, and the LSCB Manager, all of whom have been helpful and open to challenge and question.

4. Role of the Independent Member

The Independent Member was appointed on the basis of a recommendation from the Director of Children and Families, Children and Young People's Services. The Committee appointed Hilary Corrick for 6 months in the first instance. She has extensive experience in a wide range of social service work including senior positions at local authority and national level and now works as an independent social work consultant. In January 2010 the Committee considered her longer term appointment and this was confirmed.

She has provided training for Members at each meeting, undertaken independent audit work for the Committee, undertaken a brief feedback survey with service users and referrers on behalf of the Committee, and supported Members in scrutinising a number of referrals and challenging officers.

She has attended Overview and Scrutiny Committee meetings on behalf of the Committee, as well as Cabinet meetings, and attended full Council to support the Committee Chair. She has drafted reports on behalf of the Committee Chair.

5. Future work plans

The Committee were concerned that certain groups of children were particularly vulnerable and sometimes fell just outside the Children's Services eligibility thresholds. This might include the children of disabled



Haringey Council

parents, children whose parents had mental health issues, life style issues and other vulnerabilities, as well as vulnerable young people who may have been children in need who do not meet the eligibility thresholds of Adult Services.

A future work programme might be:

- The role of the Common Assessment Framework and an audit of all cases referred to the CAF Panel on a particular date. This could be a date in March so that the cases could be reviewed by the Committee at its July meeting.
- The relationship between Children and Adult Social Care services, particularly in respect of young people who have been the subject of child protection plans and are vulnerable young adults.
- An audit of children known to the police as living in households where domestic violence is a feature.

This would sit alongside briefings from officers about the new First Response arrangements and joint work with other agencies, as well as briefings about assessment and the child protection and safeguarding agenda from the independent Member and other relevant professionals. There would be the capacity for other immediate relevant issues to be considered.